

April 09, 2023 Matthew 28: 1-10 (Easter Vigil readings) & Acts 10:34-43

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall)

Stone, Naomi. [Servant of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Midwives of Hope](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Our text today is loaded with action. After those awful days of horror, John tells us that a couple of women come to the tomb and experience terror after an earthquake. God's messenger tells them not to be afraid. Still full of fear, but overflowing with the news that death is not the end of Jesus (or us), they race to the disciples to do as they were told. Imagine the shock when they meet the risen Jesus on their way. He also tells them not to be afraid. Now, he tells each of us; "Do not be afraid". Death is part of each life, but it is NOT the end. It is the end of this part of our lives, but the beginning of the rest of our being. Alleluia!

Mt. 28: 1 After the **Sabbath**, as the first day of the week was **dawning**, **Mary Magdalene** and the other **Mary** came to see the tomb. 2 And **behold**, there was a great **earthquake**; for an **angel** of the Lord **descended** from heaven, approached, **rolled back the stone**, and sat upon it. 3 His appearance was like **lightning**, and his clothing was **white as snow**. 4 The guards were **shaken** with **fear** of him and became like **dead men**. 5 Then the **angel** said to the women in reply, "**Do not be afraid!** I know that you are **seeking** Jesus the **crucified**. 6 He is not here, for he has been **raised** just as he said. **Come and see** the place where he lay. 7 **Then go quickly and**

tell his disciples, 'He has been **raised** from the **dead**, and he is **going before you** to **Galilee**; there **you will see him**.' Behold, I have told you." 8 **Then they went** away quickly from the tomb, **fearful yet overjoyed**, and ran to **announce** 5 this to his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them **on their way** and **greeted** them. They **approached**, **embraced** his feet, and did him homage. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "**Do not be afraid**. **Go tell** my brothers to go to **Galilee**, and there they **will see me**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: The women's love overcame their fear, and they went to do their last loving thing for Jesus. How has my love overcome my fears this past year?

PRAYER: In the tomb / Christ is planted at last / like a sacred seed. / The agony is over. / Safe, / finally, / from thorns / and nails and spears. / God is very still / and a great vacuum builds / at the heart of things. / The guards of this world / are lulled into drowsiness / beside the stone. / A profound ignorance fills this last / moment / before sunrise. Alleluia

(Margie McCreless Roe Christian Century 3/23-30/94 page 304)

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SABBATH: No work or travel was permitted on the Sabbath, so the women had to wait till it was over.
What part does waiting have in making something new possible?

DAWNING: At the earliest possible moment the women set out to go to the tomb.
What do you think they felt as they groped in the dim light of morning toward the place of burial?

MARY MAGDALENE/MARY: John tells us that two women are to be the first to see the risen Jesus.
Why do you think women were chosen for this role?

BEHOLD: To behold is to be present to something that you hold in your being.
What make this word so good for this moment?

EARTHQUAKE/ SHAKEN: The awesome power of an earthquake can radically change everything. Nothing remains static.
Has anything shaken you enough recently so that you cannot stay the same?

ANGEL: Angels, God's messengers, are often seen as revealing God from a different angle.
Has this Lenten time given you any new ways of seeing God's process in your life?

DESCENDED: To descend is to come from a higher place.
Have any new revelations descended on you this Easter time?

ROLLED BACK THE STONE: To roll back a stone is to open something or to remove an obstacle.
Have any 'stones' that were closing off or obstructing your faith life been moved this past year?

LIGHTNING: Lightning is a bolt of energy that connects the sky with the earth.
What makes lightning such a good medium for Easter?

WHITE AS SNOW: The color white includes all the other colors.
What makes white such an appropriate color for this event?

DEAD MEN / CRUCIFIED: Jesus' crucified body was truly dead. The guards fear frightened them as if they were dead.
Have you ever experienced this kind of fear? If so, how does this help you appreciate this event?

DO NOT BE AFRAID/FEAR/ FEARFUL:
How can fear kill and the lack of fear give life?

SEEKING: The women were looking for a dead body.
Have you ever been looking for something, only to be confronted with a totally unexpected reality like these women?

RAISED: Jesus expected God to raise him from the dead. No one had any idea what that meant.
Do you have this same problem with imagining your own resurrection?

COME AND SEE / GO TELL: Once the women have seen they are to immediately go and tell what they have seen.
What have you seen this Easter that you need to share with others?

GOING BEFORE YOU: Jesus is always out ahead of us luring us to the Father.
What / who pulls you deeper into faith this Easter season?

YOU WILL SEE HIM / WILL SEE ME: The messenger tells the women you will see the risen Jesus. They do! Then Jesus tells the women to share this with the disciples.
Have you experienced any messenger who revealed Jesus to you? Have you been a messenger for another?

THEN THEY WENT: The women did as they were told and went in faith that they would see Jesus.
Have you ever went and did as you were told and did so in faith that you would see?

OVERJOYED: To be overjoyed is to be so full of joy that you can't contain it all.
What in this gospel has the power to fill you so full that you can't hold it all in?

ANNOUNCE: To announce is to proclaim something or someone.
What is being proclaimed in this gospel to you?

GREETED: To greet someone is to encounter and recognize their presence.
Who greets you in this text?

ON THEIR WAY: Jesus meets the women as they were on their way to fulfill the task the angel gave them.
Does God also meet you as you are on your way to becoming who you are meant to be?

APPROACHED: One can only imagine the feelings as the women approach the risen Jesus.
What do you imagine they were feeling?

EMBRACED: To embrace someone is to take them into one's arms and hold them close.
What/ who are you holding close this Easter morning?

GALILLE: What begins in Galilee now resumes there in Matthew's gospel. From there it reaches into the entire world.
Do you experience the reach in your own life in a deeper way this year?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 28: 1-8 // Mk. 16: 1-8, Lk. 24: 1-10; Mt. 28:3 // Mt. 17: 2; Mt. 28:7 // Mt. 26:32; Mt. 28:10 // Acts 1:3;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Gen. 1: 1, 26-31; [Ps. 118](#); Rom. 6: 3-11; Mt. 28: 1-10

Revised Common Lectionary: [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#); [Psalm 114](#); [Romans 6:3-11](#); [Matthew 28:1-10](#)

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

We will be as unique in the resurrection as we are in our mortal bodies, because God, who loves each of us in our individuality, will give us bodies in which our most unique relationship with God will gloriously shine. Henri Nouwen

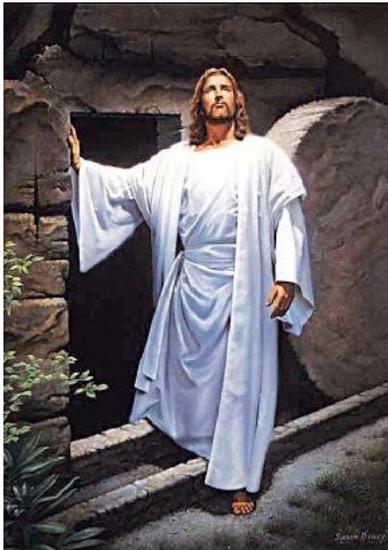
Jesus' historical transformation ("resurrected flesh") allows us more easily to experience the Presence that has always been available since the beginning of time, a Presence unlimited by space or time, which is the promise and "guarantee" of our own transformation (see [1 Corinthians 15:1-53](#)). In Jesus the Timeless Christ became time bound, so we could enjoy the personal gaze, as it were (see [1 John 1-2](#)). Richard Rohr

The resurrection recapitulates the whole evolutionary emergent creation as a forward movement to become something new, a new heaven and a new earth. What took place in Christ is intended for the whole cosmos, union and transformation in the divine embrace of love!The resurrection of Jesus undergirds the fact that life creates the universe, not the other way round. Every act of physical death is an act of new life in the universe. The resurrection of Jesus speaks to us of this new life. Ilia Delio

The risen, victorious Jesus gives us a history and hopeful future that moves beyond predictable violence. He destroys death not by canceling it out; but by making a trophy of it. Jesus introduces the revolutionary idea of restorative justice, which is a totally divine idea and possibility. Any notion of retributive justice only perpetuates the problem, and pulls God down to our finite level. Jesus says in effect, "I'm going to use my death to love all perpetrators even more." Jesus' resurrection is a statement about how reality works: always moving toward resurrection. ,, Resurrection is not a miracle as much as it is an enduring relationship. ...His resurrection is not so much a miracle that we can argue about, believe, or disbelieve, but an invitation to look deeper at what is always happening in the life process itself. Richard Rohr

The resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our faith in the resurrection of our bodies. Often we hear the suggestion that our bodies are the prisons of our souls and that the spiritual life is the way out of these prisons. But by our faith in the resurrection of the body we proclaim that the spiritual life and the life in the body cannot be separated. Our bodies, as Paul says, are temples of the Holy Spirit (see [1 Corinthians 6:19](#)) and, therefore, sacred. The resurrection of the body means that what we have lived in the body will not go to waste

but will be lifted in our eternal life with God. As Christ bears the marks of his suffering in his risen body, our bodies in the resurrection will bear the marks of our suffering. Our wounds will become signs of glory in the resurrection. Henri Nouwen



"Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above the ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost the sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux. What we see is blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains."— Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

Eternal life is not some great surprise that comes unannounced at the end of our existence in time; it is, rather, the full revelation of what we have been and have lived all along. Death is the portal to the fullness of life. Pg. 109. Nouwen, Henri. *Life of the Beloved*. NY. Crossroad. 1992

Easter begs us to refrain from killing life before its dead. Easter declares that our notions of conclusions are nothing more than indicators of beginnings. Easter invites us to believe that what is done is often only done because we have deemed it so, and that such a judgement does not possess the power to actually make it so. Easter is a promise that there is always something that follows the darkest night, the most desolate moment, the most detestable actions, and the most searing pain. Easter is about conclusions being the very beginnings that we are in such

desperate need of. Easter asks that we quit burying that which is not dead out of the fear of how glorious life might actually be if we let it live. That is both the promise and invitation of Easter!

- Craig D. Lounsbrough

The joyful news that He is risen does not change the contemporary world. Still before us lie work, discipline, and sacrifice. But the fact of Easter gives us the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline, and make the sacrifice. Henry Knox Sherrill

In the Risen Christ, God reveals the final state of reality. God forbids us to accept "as-it-is" in favor of "what-God's-love-can-make-it." To believe in Resurrection means to cross and transcend boundaries. Because of the promise of the Resurrection of Jesus we realistically can have a passion for the possible. Richard Rohr

"We feel an inkling of the perfection and stability of eternity, for there is neither time nor space, neither before nor after, but everything present in one new, fresh-springing now where millenniums last no longer than the twinkling of an eye."

- Meister Eckhart [14th C.], "Sermons and Collations," XII

"As the body must be born after completing its development in the womb, so a soul, when it has reached the limit of life in the body allotted it by God, must leave the body." - St. Anthony the Great

Jesus's resurrection makes it impossible for the human story to end in chaos - it has to move inexorably towards light, towards life, towards love. - Carlo Carretto

Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in words alone but in every leaf in springtime. - Martin Luther

"Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there." - Clarence W. Hall

Out of the certainty of the Resurrection of Jesus there springs the early Church's certitude that the Risen One is the goal of the universe, that he is the One toward whom everything has been created. Pg. 137.

Schonbon, Cardinal Christoph. *Chance or Purpose*. San Francisco. Ignatius Press. 2007.

This is my enlightened, well-founded hope: dying is a farewell inward, and entry and homecoming into the ground and origin of the world, our true home, a farewell perhaps not without pain and anxiety, but hopefully in composure and surrender, at any rate without weeping and wailing, and without bitterness and despair, but rather in hopeful expectation, quiet certainty, and (after everything that has to be settled is settled) ashamed gratitude for all the good things and less good things that now finally and definitively lie behind us – thank God. Pg. 206.

Kung, Hans. *The Beginning of All Things: Science & Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2007.

...this Jesus of Nazareth did not die into nothingness, but into God. So trusting in this message, I hope as a Christian, like many people in other religions, not to die into nothingness, which seems to me to be extremely irrational and senseless. Rather, I hope to die into the ultimate reality, into God, which – beyond space and time in the hidden real dimension of the infinite – transcends all human reason and conceiving. Pg. 205-6. Kung, Hans. *The Beginning of All Things: Science & Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2007.

HOLY SATURDAY

In the tomb / Christ is planted at last / like a sacred seed. / The agony is over. / Safe, / finally, / from thorns / and nails and spears. / God is very still / and a great vacuum builds / at the heart of things. / The guards of this world / are lulled into drowsiness / beside the stone. / A profound ignorance fills this last / moment / before sunrise. Alleluia

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The human spirit abides in the body very much as the chicken in the shell. If it were possible for the bird within the shell to be told that outside of it was a great widespread world, with all kinds of fruit and flowers, with rivers and grand mountains, that its mother also was there, and that it would see all this when set free from its shell, it could not understand or believe it... In the same way there are many who are uncertain about the future life and the existence of God, because they cannot see beyond this shell-like body of flesh, and their thoughts, like delicate wings, cannot carry them beyond the narrow confines of the brain. Their weak eyes cannot discover those eternal and unfading treasures which God has prepared for those who love Him. - Sadhu Sundar Singh

“Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.”

— N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*

Earlier I spoke of the “gift of death” which comes when our heart and breathing stop. Death's large dark hand effortlessly cracks open our egg shell with a thundering sonic boom and frees us in a brilliant blinding explosion of light. Instantly, we are intimately connected consciously with everyone, all of creation and the entire expanding universe with its untold billions of galaxies and their hundreds of billions of sun-stars...as well as with all the other universes yet to be discovered. We are gifted now to live in never-ending wonder of a perpetual Easter Communion with all that is created and is being created along with our mysteriously beloved Creator. [Ed Hays](#)

At the resurrection the substance of our bodies, however disintegrated, will be united. We must not fear that the omnipotence of God cannot recall all the particles that have been consumed by fire or by beast, or dissolved into dust and ashes, or decomposed into water, or evaporated into air.- St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *The City of God*, v. II

SUGGESTED READINGS

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2014. Pgs. 95-99. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#) Based on John 20: 19-31 the reading for Easter Day